

Message Text

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23 45

ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9244

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: THE REFERENDUM POSITIONS ARE EMERGING BUT MUCH REMAINS
OBSCURE

1. WITH THE REFERENDUM NOW JUST OVER ONE WEEK AWAY. THE
POSITIONS OF THE MANY POLITICAL GROUPS ARE GUADUALLY EMERGING,
BUT SOME HEDGING IS STILL APPARENT,AS IS THE PREFERENCE
OF SOME TO DOWN PLAY ITS SIGNIFICANCE. VIRTUALLY ALL SECTORS
CONTINUE TO AGREE, EITHER PRIVATELY OR PUBLICLY, THAT AN
AFFIRMATIVE OUTCOME IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

2. AT THIS POINT SOME GROUPS HAVE TAKEN UNEQUIVOCAL STANDS.
FRAGA USED THE ALLOTTED TELEVISION TIME DECEMBER 1 TO DECLARE
ALIANZA POPULAR SUPPORT FOR A YES VOTE, WHILE ON THE SAME
EVENING AN OBSURE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (OF THE CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC UNION) DID LIKE WISE. THE FOLLOWING EVENING
FAR-RIGHT FUERZA NUEVA LEADER BLAS PINAR URGED A NO VOTE,
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WHILE A RIGHT WING SPANISH NATIONAL UNION SPOKESMAN FAVORED

PARTICIPATION WITH FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE REGARDING WHICH WAY TO VOTE. THE CENTRIST PARTIDO POPULAR HAS COME OUT IN FAVOR OF "AFFIRMATIVE PARTICIPATION", AS HAS THE NEW SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE, WHILE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POPULAR PARTY (ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA) LAMENTED THE DEFICIENCIES OF THE LAW BEING JUDGED BUT CONCLUDED IT COULD NOT RECOMMEND ABSTENTION. (WE ANTICIPATE SIMILARY TORTURED POSITIONS ON THE PART OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL CD'S RUIZ GIMENEZ AND GIL ROBLES.) THE PSOE HAS STOOD BY ITS LONGSTANDING ABSTENTION POSITION, WHICH THE PSP HAS RECENTLY (AND SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY) JOINED THE COMMUNISTS PART OF COURSE FAVORS ABSTENTION, AS DO SOME, GENERALLY MORELEFTIST REGIONAL GROUPS.

3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO WRESTLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF SIMULTANEOUSLY APPEARING SCRUPULOUS AND GETTING OUT THE YES VOTE. WHILE REITERATING ITS POSITION THAT ANY RESPONSE, INCLUDING ABSTENTION, IS "LICIT" AND MAY BE CALLED FOR OPENLY REPORTS HAVE CONTINUED ON ARRESTS OF PERSONS DISTRIBUTING PRO ABSTENTION LITERATURE, A REFLECTION OF THE OTHER PART OF THE GOVT'S POSITION, THAT ILLEGAL GROUPS MAY NOT TAKE FROM "LEGALIZABLE" ACTIVE PUBLIC ROLES. OBSERVERS HAVE COMMENTED ON THE RECENT SHIFT IN THE TRUST OF OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA, WHICH HAVING PREVIOUSLY CENTERED ON THE SLOGAN "INFORM YOUR SELF WELL AND VOTE" NOW HAS THE THEME "THERE ARE REASONS FOR VOTING YES". THE PRESS IS REPORTING THAT IN REFERENDUM RELATED MOVE. PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ WILL VISIT BARCELONA DECEMBER 13, WHERE HE IS TO ANNOUNCE CO OFFICIAL STATUS FOR THE CATALAN LANGUAGE THE FOLLOWING EVENING (REFERENDUM EVE) HE WILL GO ON TELEVISION TO ADDRESS THE NATION.

4. IN BROAD TERMS, THEN ALONG WITH MANY EXCEPTIONS AND EVASIONS, THE PICTURE IS CLARIFYING; THE FAR RIGHT FAVORS A "NO" THE RIGHT OF CENTER (ALIANZA POPULAR), THE CENTER, AND THE GOVT FAVOR A "YES" AND THE LEFT FAVORS ABSTENTION, (INTERESTINGLY THE BLANK VOTE, TRADITIONALLY A PROTEST SYMBOL HAS RECEIVED NO PLAY FROM THE ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUPS, AND MAY END UP THE EXCLUSIVE PRESERVE OF THE SIMPLY CONFUSED). WE SIGNAL NOW, HOWEVER, THE WARNING THAT THE OUTCOME WILL BE NO MEANS SHOW US THE RELATIVE ELECTORAL STRENGTHS OF POLITICAL

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GROUPS. AT LEAST WITH ANY PRECISION. REGARDING THE YES VOTE, IT PROMOTERS ARE TOO MANY AND TOO DIVERSE, AND A GOOD MANY VOTERS MIGHT WANT TO SUPPORT THE REFORM BUT IN LATER ELECTIONS SHOW THEMSELVES TO THE LEFT OF THE YES" PROMOTERS, JUST AS SOME COULD DUTIFULLY VOTE YES EVEN THOUGH APPREHENSIVE OVER WHAT DEMOCRACY COULD BRING. THE "NO" VOTES MAY BE AN INDICATOR OF TRADITIONALIST SENTIMENT, BUT SEEM CERTAIN TO INCLUDE A GOOD MANY OF THE MILDLY CONSERVATIVE

AND OR GEARFUL, NOT JUST THOSE RESPONSIVE TO THE ORGANIZED REFLEXIVE RIGHT.

5. THE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS SEEMS LIKELY TO BE, IF ANYTHING THE HARDEST OF ALL TO JUDGE: IT WILL INCLUDE THE MORE DISCIPLINED FOLLOWERS OF THE PSOE AND PCE, TO BE SURE, AND OTHERS DIAPPOINTED IN THE NATURE AND OR PACE OF REFORM TO DATE. BUT IT WILL ALSO INCLUDE TRADITIONALISTS AND SOME CONSERVATIVES TOO TURNED OFF OR TOO APATHETIC TO BOTHER VOTING AS WELL AS THE SICK, THE INFIRM AND THE ABSENT, THE DISTANT, THE MARGINALIZED, AND THOSE DETERMINED TO RESIST THE GOVT LINE IF ONLY FOR THE NOVELTY OF BEING ABLE TO. THE FACT THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM IS TAKEN BY MOST AU A GIVEN MAY ALSO HOLD DOWN THE VOTE. CONVERSELY, ALTHOUGH VOTING IN THIS REFERENDU IS NOT LEGALLY OBLIGATORY, SOME WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE ABSTAINED MAY GO AHEAD AND CAST A BALLOT ANYWAY OUT OF A RESIDUAL FEARS OF SORT OF FINE OR OTHER SANCTION.

6. THE COMPLCATIONS SURROUNDING ABSTENTION ARE REFECTED IN THE POSITIONS OF THOSE WHO FAVOR, IT ON THE ONE HAND THEY "(WITH THE POSSIBLE EXECPTION OF THE FAR LEFT FRINGE) IN FACT WANT THE REFORM TO GO THROUGH AND WITH THE GOVT'S POPULARITY AND PRESTIGE AT AN ALL TIME HIGH, THEY EXPECT IT WILL. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE (VARYING DEGREES) BOTHERED BY WHAT THEY VIEW AS CONTINUING DEMOCRATIC IMPERFECTIONS, AND THEY ALSO WANT TO LIMIT THE SIZE OF THE GOVT VICTORY IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR OWN PROSPECTS IN THE UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS ON ELECTORAL LAW. THUS THEIR ACTIONS RANGE FROM A SIMPLE ESSENTIALLY ONE TIME, DECLARATION OF POSITION (TIERNO, SOME CD'S AND SOME SOCIAL DEMOCRATS), THROUGH EXPLAINING AND DEFENDING THE POSITION BUT ESCHEWING PUBLIC ACTS
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(THE PSOE), TO HOLDING MEETINGS, DISTRIBUTING LIERATURE, AND EARING DOWN OR DEFACING GOVT POSTERS (THE PCE AND THE SMALLER FAR LEFT GROUPS).

6. IN SUM, WE CAN EXPECT A GOOD DEAL OF SELF INTERESTED ANALYSIS AND ASSERTION ONCE THE VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED. BUT MUCH WILL REMAIN UNKNOWN ABOUT THE PARTY PREFERENCES OF THE SPANISH ELECTORATE. IN FACT, THE REFERENDUM MAY PROVE ONLY WHAT IS ALREADY WIDELY AND EVEN UNIVERSALLY BELIEVED; THAT MOST SPANIARDS FAVOR POLITICAL REFORM. STABLER

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